

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are currently pending in the instant application. Claim 8 stands objected to under 37 CFR 1.75; claims 1-3, 8, and 10-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102; and, claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103. The reason why claims 4-7 stand rejected was not stated in the Final Office Action. Applicants have not added or proposed claim amendments in this Response. Applicants request that claim 8 be canceled, as suggested by the Examiner.

I. Claim Objections

Claim 8 stands objected to under 37 CFR 1.75 as being a substantial duplicate of claim 1. Applicants have proposed the cancellation of claim 8 in response to the Examiner's finding.

II. Claim Rejections

A. Rejection of Claims 1-3, 8, and 10-15 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3, 8, and 10-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Miura et al. ("Miura," U.S. Pat. No. 6,346,465). Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's finding with arguments presented below.

1. Claim 1 Includes An Annealing Step After Nitrogen Incorporation and Before Nickel Deposition

Claim 1 includes the following recitations:

incorporating nitrogen into said processed substrate;
annealing said processed substrate after incorporating nitrogen into said
processed substrate for removing defects caused by nitrogen
implantation;
depositing nickel onto said processed substrate

In other words, the subject method invention requires an annealing step subsequent to nitrogen implantation and prior to nickel deposition.

2. Miura Does Not Disclose An Annealing Step After Nitrogen Incorporation and Before Nickel Deposition

The Examiner points to Column 8, lines 56-61 as disclosing “incorporating nitrogen into at least a region smaller than the entire top surface of the processed substrate and annealing the processed substrate.” Respectfully, Miura discusses the direct nitridation of a substrate in an ammonia atmosphere at 300 °C in the subject section but makes no mention of a separate annealing step. That the nitridation process occurs at 300 °C is not equivalent to annealing, which is performed to remove defects of the process.

3. The 35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejection Should Be Withdrawn

As the cited reference does not disclose all elements of claim 1, which is the only independent claim at issue, Applicants respectfully request that the anticipation rejection be withdrawn.

B. Rejection of Claim 9 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Miura. Applicants respectfully contend that since Miura does not disclose all elements of claim 1—see argument above—it cannot be used to make a *prima facie* case of obviousness for claim 9.

C. Rejection of Claims 4-7

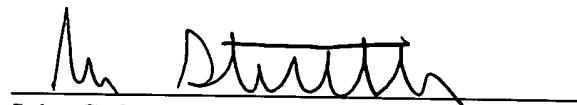
No grounds for the rejection of claims 4-7 is stated in the Final Office Action mailed 08/27/2003. Applicants respectfully request clarification on this issue.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections and objections is requested. Allowance is earnestly solicited at the earliest possible date.

Respectfully submitted,

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